

A LETTER to the LORDS upon the Matter of the Occasional Bill.

My Lords,

TIS credibly reported, That the Honourable House of Commons is preparing a Bill for the prevention of Hypocrisy, by which (as is commonly understood) it is meant, That no Person in Public Office, who has communicated in the Supper of our Lord according to the Order of the Church of England, shall be ever after permitted to join in any Form of Religious Worship with any Dissenting Congregation, without being liable to forfeit his publick Trust. I make no doubt the House of Commons will send this Bill up to your Lordships for your Concurrence. Nor can I conceive to whom they can apply themselves for the prevention and detection of Hypocrisy better than to your Lordships. The Sincerity of your Lordships Ancestors to the Interest of their Country in the most dangerous Times, together with your own Noble Blood and Generous Education, are more than sufficient to justify the Commons Application to your Lordships hereupon: For Hypocrisy must above all things be the utmost detestation and abhorrence of the *English* Peerage, as it is the lowest Embasement, and unpardonable Blemish of true Honour.

A Hypocrite is a wretched, cowardly, sneeking Offal of Mankind: And your Lordships cannot but abhor

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Hypocrisy, because 'tis the basest and vilest Prostitution of all Credit and Honour amongst Men; and in this you are justify'd by God himself, who declares, That he abhors a Hypocrite because he prostitutes his Conscience, which is his sense of Honour towards God.

And your Lordships cannot but have observ'd heretofore some Persons to have had in themselves so base an Allay, as to have engag'd the Sacred Ordinances of God himself in the Service of such low and mean Designs, as their own domineering Pride, or their Covetousness, either of Wealth, Honour, or Power, and perhaps sometimes mere Malice and ill Nature, have suggested.

This self-ended Hypocrisy has sometimes assum'd to it self the Shape of Loyalty, and (as far as I perceive) may lay claim to great Antiquity; as appears by the Address of the Grandees of *Babylon* to *Nebuchadnezzar* their King, which I have read in the Book of *Daniel*; wherein they pass so high a Complement upon their Prince, as to forbid all Supplications to any God or Man saving to him alone. And all this was done only to take a religious Handle to turn *Daniel* out of his Place, which the King had deservedly bestow'd upon him, and which he had very honourably discharg'd. I have heard that the Orthodox Christians and the Arians, did in their turns invent religious Tests whereby to supplant one another: And that a Presbyterian Preacher warmly inveighing against the Bishops in the late Times, said, *This is God's Cause which I plead, or else he shall be no God for me.* But for Men in any case to pretend the Cause of God in order to supplant their Neighbours, and to put them out of their Trusts which are honestly discharg'd, seems to me to carry something of the Air of Hypocrisy in it; and so does all Partiality. Wherefore I hold my self oblig'd, under the Penalty of your Lordships Displeasure, which I would
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by no means incur, to state the Matter of Occasional Conformity with all sincerity, according to the best of my Understanding.

But because I may not be so perfectly instructed in the Doctrine of the Sacraments as the Learned are, I will determine nothing positively herein, but only upon Supposals.

Supposing then that the Sacrament of the Holy Communion was intended for the Secular Interest of the Priesthood, so that every Communicant were thereby oblig'd to uphold and maintain the particular Interest of the Clergy, from whose hands they receive the Elements, against all whom they (for Reasons best known to themselves) shall think fit to oppose; I confess, upon this Supposal, I should take all such to be Hypocrites, or (which is all one to me) Knaves, who having receiv'd the Sacrament from a Conformable Minister, shall afterwards join himself to a Dissenting Congregation: And were I a Clergy-man of the Church, I should say such a one was a Hypocrite, a Jack-a-both-sides, a Tom-double, and unfit for any Place of Trust; who when I had given him the Sacrament to qualify him for a Place, should basely desert the Church-Interest and join with the Dissenters.

But on the contrary, if it should be so as I have heard Scholars say upon this Subject, that this Sacrament was intended only as a Memorial of the precious Death of our Saviour, I do not see how it can be made use of to draw a Man to be of any Party of Christians: So that if either a Church-Parson or a Dissenter should challenge me for his Property because I receiv'd the Sacrament from his hand, I should be so free as to tell him, that he has no more particular Interest in the Sacrament than another Man. So that I am still at liberty, with a due respect to the Memory of my Lord and Saviour, to receive either at

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Geneva or Holland, or from any Protestant Minister, without being engag'd in any particular Clergy-Interest whatsoever.

Notwithstanding this, I shall always pay a respect to the Constitution of the Church of *England* as by Law establish'd; as also to any of her Clergy-men in whom I see Learning, Probity, Industry, or any other virtuous Accomplishment: especially if I perceive in him a love to his Queen and Country, and to the *Protestant Succession as at present establish'd*, I cannot forbear to shew respect to such a Clergy-man.

But if a Church-Priest shall tell me that I am a Hypocrite, because I shew a respect to other Clergy or Lay-men who are not of his Communion, I shall suspect him of some by-ends, which the Spirit of the Christian Religion does in no way favour. I know that your Lordships have sufficient Penetration and Generosity to discern and discourage all Hypocrisy. Thus I take leave of your Lordships, hoping that you will pardon the roughness of my Stile; since every Writer must fall short of that Politeness which is so peculiar to your most Honourable House, and no Man more than

Your most humble and most obedient

Servant in all sincerity,

Roger.